

Estates and Facilities Alert

Reference: EFA/2018/004 Issued: 22 August 2018 Review Date: 01 August 2021



Integrated Plumbing System (IPS) Panels – risk of accidental detachment



Summary

A number of adverse incident reports have been received where IPS Panels have detached accidentally from the wall and fallen. In two of the reported incidents, injuries were received to persons that required clinical attention. In all reported incidents the panels were only retained with concealed plastic push fit clips.

Action

Estates Staff/Facility Managers

- Identify all areas where IPS panels are installed and inspect the IPS Panel fixing method.
- Where concealed plastic push fit fixings are utilised to hold the IPS panel to the wall, carry out a multi-disciplinary risk assessment with relevant parties to assess risk of panels causing harm.
- Where the local risk assessment indicates a safety risk to persons, take appropriate action to manage the risk.
- When reinstalling IPS Panels following routine maintenance procedures, reassess the security of each panel and take appropriate action where necessary.

Clinical and Domestic staff

- Be aware that IPS Panels, with concealed plastic push fit fixings, can accidentally detach from the wall.
- Where an IPS Panel that could present a hazard to persons, appears loose, insecurely installed or where it looks to be out of alignment you should prevent persons from using that area and immediately report the issue to the Estates Department.
- Be vigilant when using or filling dispensers or fittings that are attached to IPS Panels (e.g. grab rails, towel, apron or soap dispensers, etc.).

Healthcare Designers, Contractors and Supply Chains

- In the design, specification and installation of IPS panel systems select appropriate installation methods taking into consideration the risk that IPS Panels, secured by concealed plastic push fit fittings, can inappropriately detach from the wall causing injury to staff and service users.
- Note that the risk of push fit panels failing may increase with time and with fixtures or fittings (towel holders, soap dispensers, etc.) mounted to the IPS Panels above sinks.

Action by

- Estates/Facility Managers and Staff responsible for maintaining services behind IPS Panels;
- Clinical and domestic staff in areas where IPS Panels are fitted;
- Healthcare Designers, Contractors and Supply Chains.

Deadlines for action

Actions underway: 19 September 2018
Actions complete: 21 November 2018

Problem / background

IPS panels are widely used in the healthcare environment to conceal pipe work and services to sanitary installations. They provide an installation that is easy to clean, with ready access to the engineering services that are located behind. There are a number of ways these panels can be fixed to the infrastructure, but the reported incidents of inappropriate detachment only occurred with panels that were affixed with plastic push-fit clips. The root cause of the reported incidents has not been fully identified and could involve a number of contributory factors; for example, dimensional tolerance variances during installation; general wear and tear on the fixing; warping of the panels and misuse by service users.

The risk to personal safety of staff and service users increases when the panel extends above head height, particularly where it is mounted above sinks and toilets in a patient area (especially where vulnerable patients may be unsupervised). The risk will also be higher where there is regular panel removal or a manipulation of fixtures and fittings located on the removable panel, e.g. rails, soap, towel, glove or apron dispensers.

Distribution

Directors of Estates & Facilities, Risk Managers, Health & Safety Managers, Support Services Managers, Capital Procurement Teams, P22 Contractors and Healthcare facility project design teams.

Enquiries

This alert has been compiled under a partnership arrangement by the organisations below and it has been distributed across the UK. Enquiries should be directed to the appropriate Regional Office quoting the alert reference number.

England

Enquires should quote reference number EFA/2018/004 and be addressed to:-
nhsi.mb-defectsandfailures@nhs.net

Reporting adverse incidents in England

Defects or failures should be reported on this system: <http://efm.hscic.gov.uk/>

The web-based D&F reporting system is managed by the NHS Digital on behalf of NHS Improvement. For further information on this system, including obtaining login details, please contact the efm-information Helpdesk. Tel 0300 303 5678.

Northern Ireland

Enquiries and adverse incident reports in Northern Ireland should be addressed to:

Northern Ireland Adverse Incident Centre, CMO Group,
Department of Health
Tel: 028 9052 3868 Email: niaic@health-ni.gov.uk
<http://www.health-ni.gov.uk/niaic>

Reporting adverse incidents in Northern Ireland

Please report directly to NIAIC using the [forms on our website](#).

Scotland

Enquiries and adverse incident reports in Scotland should be addressed to:

Incident Reporting and Investigation Centre (IRIC)
Health Facilities Scotland, NHS National Services Scotland
Tel: 0131 275 7575 E-mail: nss.irc@nhs.net

Reporting adverse incidents in Scotland

Use our [online report form](#) or download the [PDF form](#)
Independent facilities which only provide private care should report to the [Care Inspectorate](#).

Wales

Enquiries and adverse incident reports in Wales should be addressed to:

Simon Russell, Principal Engineer, NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership – Specialist Estates
Services, 4th Floor, Companies House, Crown Way, Cardiff CF14 3UB

Tel: 029 2090 4100
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